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## STONE AGE MAN'S CURE FOR HEADACHE

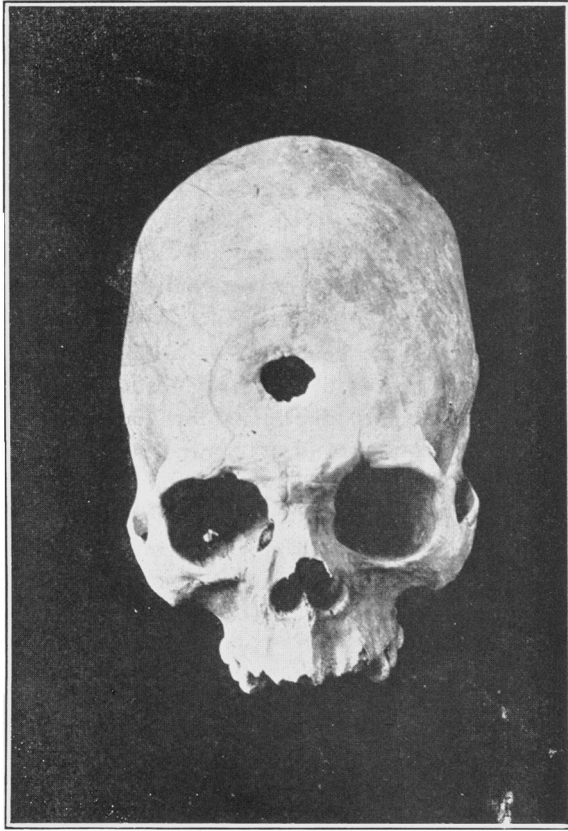
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**H**HEADACHES are bothersome things. People have been annoyed by them for a long time, seven thousand years at least, and probably longer. We are all quite willing, when afflicted with a headache, to agree with the people of the old stone age that a headache is a demon and we would be willing to do most anything to get rid of it. The pain whether due to a blow on the head, indigestion, nervousness or other cause certainly reminds one of a demon and it is readily understood how ancient man should have conceived the idea of releasing this demon which was bothering him. He devised a remedy which certainly was an effective cure for headache whether the pain was due to eye-strain, brain tumor, skull fracture or nervousness, although it must be admitted that his cure was worse than the pain.

Primitive man devised his curative measures as a phase of his religious beliefs, hence the cure adopted for headaches was a religious rite. The operation was performed by a shaman or medicine man in some remote fastness of his region and here the patient remained until completely recovered. This treatment consisted in opening the skull in a variety of ways to relieve the pain, or, as the stone age men thought, to let out the demon. Men in the stone age phase of their culture whether in Peru, Mexico, France, Kabylia or the South Sea Islands practiced this method of relief and it is said to be still employed in the highlands of Peru and Bolivia and in northern Africa.

This ancient surgical art, which forms the very beginnings of prehistoric surgery, seems to have been developed first in the region just north of Paris near the Seine and Oise rivers some seven or eight thousand years ago. In the dolmens, or burial mounds, scientists have found the ancient skulls of people who had suffered headache and who had had their skulls trepanned or opened to release the headache demon. No special class of individuals seems to have been favored since the operation was performed on man, woman and child, apparently without respect to either age or sex. Its frequency is attested by the great number of skulls exhibiting the surgical openings. In one burial mound in France yielding the bones of 120 individuals more than 40 showed the effects of trepanation.



SKULL OF ANCIENT INDIAN WHO SUFFERED HEADACHE. THE RESULT OF THE "CURE" BY THE WITCH-DOCTOR IS SEEN IN THE FOREHEAD, WHERE THE BONE HAD BEEN SCRAPED AWAY BY A SHARP FLAKE OF STONE. SUCH SKULLS ARE COMMONLY FOUND IN PERU.

It isn't very pleasant to picture the torture undergone by the ancient sufferer at the hands of the priest who either cut, scraped or bored the bone of the skull away with a sharp piece of stone. Some relief from pain may have been had by the application of a quid of coca, a plant yielding anesthetic substances which grows in Peru. But the worst thing about headaches is that they recur, so the ancient people not deterred by one failure submitted themselves to the operation again and again. A few ancient skulls reveal five cruel openings, which had all healed. The patient had survived them all.

The equipment of the primitive surgeon was meager. His knowledge of cleanliness was not keen. If he possessed a rough flint knife, a scraper, a few leaves of the coca plant and a piece of coarse cloth to bind the wound he was content. A mossy bank out in the woods served him for an operating table.